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To: MLPAComments@resources.ca.gov
Cc: MLPA@yahoogroups.com; kaitilin Gaffney; Steve Shimek; Jesus Ruiz; Marc Shargel
Subject: MLPAComments: The Rationale for Package 2's Pt Lobos SMCA-buffered northern boundary

The MLPA Initiative Master Plan Framework, on page 52, states: "The combination of the use of marine reserves, marine parks and marine conservation areas has an especially valuable role to play... For instance, a marine reserve could be buffered with a marine park in which some types of recreational fishing are regulated but allowed or with a marine conservation area where limited recreation and commercial fishing are allowed. The buffer zone may allow the full benefit of spillover to be realized in the limited-take area."

Heeding the recommendations of the Master Plan Framework, Package 2 carefully designed a conservation area buffer at 36 32.0, north of the 36 31.6 line of the Greater Pt Lobos marine reserve. The north edge of the marine reserve was carefully placed to accommodate commercial spot prawn trap fishing - a sustainable fishery that has developed specifically with the encouragement of marine conservationists over the past decade. The fishers involved in this fishery moved from more destructive fishing practices with the understanding that the conservation community would support them in this new endeavor. The spot prawn trap fishery has thrived, and is a success story between fishers and conservationists.

There is also a strong conservation need to protect the unique habitat of the nearshore Carmel Canyon just north of the 31.6 reserve line. This is perhaps the deepest canyon closest to shore along the California coastline, made even more unique by the proximity of the mouth of the Carmel River and its estuary. Technical divers report many deepwater rockfish close to shore along the ridges and pinnacles of this steep canyon wall, including Yelloweye, Rosy, China, Starry and Vermillion rockfish. Other rare deepwater benthic species of vertebrates and invertebrates (such as huge vase sponges) occur here, remarkably close to shore. Without this SMCA buffer zone, rockfish would only be protected in a very thin shallow sliver of marine reserve very close to shore.

For these reasons, the SMCA/SMR Point Lobos deepwater canyon buffer zone should remain in Package 2, and should be adopted by the BRTF.

Sincerely yours,

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